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A Conductor's Analysis of Morten Lauridsen's *Lux Aeterna*

by

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Abstract

In order to effectively rehearse and perform any piece of music it is necessary that the conductor first deconstruct it in order to gain a detailed understanding of the individual components and the role they play in the work as a whole. This paper provides a comprehensive deconstruction and analysis of Morten Lauridsen's *Lux Aeterna*, discussing compositional device, form, harmonic language, tonality, text and text-painting. In addition, biographical information on Lauridsen and his compositional process are included. An extended discussion of the individual movements of the work provide the reader with a thorough analysis of what each is comprised of and its function in the work as a whole. The paper concludes with a brief reflection on Lauridsen's effective fusion of old and new compositional techniques. Appendices including the complete texts and translations and Lauridsen's choral works are included. In addition, a bibliography and select discography have been provided.

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I. Introduction

“If light could be set to music, Morten Lauridsen’s choral monument *Lux Aeterna* has given us this deeply felt impression and expression”.¹ Through the warmth of his harmonic language, the expression of his text-painting, and the brilliance of his combination of new and old compositional technique Lauridsen transports the listener through the void of darkness and the exuberance of light in this marvelously affective work. The true essence of the moving texts he has so effectively combined in this cycle is experienced to its fullest in his setting. It is a journey through the darkest of darks, and the brightest of lights, one that “begins in the past, but moves us—literally carries us—to lux aeterna.”²

However, an emotive performance of this work by America’s most frequently performed composer³ requires a comprehensive understanding by the conductor, the choir, and the instrumentalists, of what components are at work within it that result in its affective nature. It is essential for the conductor to attain a knowledge of how the work is constructed in order to provide direction towards the finished product. Thus, a deconstruction is required before quality construction of this complex work can commence.

What follows is an in depth investigation into the various components of Lauridsen’s work, their significance, and function. This investigation has turned up a

¹ Timothy W. Sharp, “Morten Lauridsen’s *Lux Aeterna* – A Conductor’s Considerations,” *Choral Journal* 43:7 (February 2003): 17.

² Ibid.

³ Nick Strimple, *Choral Music in the Twentieth Century* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 2002) 247-248.

plethora of information about what it is that brings life to this piece, thus revealing that which is at the heart of this “contemporary choral masterpiece, *Lux Aeterna*.”⁴

II. Morten Lauridsen: A Brief Biographical Abstract

Morten Lauridsen was born on February 27, 1943 in Colfax, Washington, and raised in nearby Portland, Oregon. His musical training began during his second year of study at Whitman College, after which he transferred to the University of Southern California where his serious study of composition began. As part of his undergraduate studies Lauridsen sang in the USC Concert Choir and took several courses in contemporary literature and poetry: these courses would later prove to play an essential role in his compositional career. After receiving his Bachelor of Music degree in 1966, Lauridsen continued his study of advanced composition under teachers Ingolf Dahl, Halsey Stevens, and Robert Linn, earning both Master of Music (1968) and Doctor of Musical Arts (1974) degrees in composition from USC.

Lauridsen joined the faculty of the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California in 1967. He served as the Chair of the Department of Composition there from 1990-2002, and founded the *Scoring for Motion Pictures and TV* Advanced Studies Program at the school. In 1993 he received the Ramo Award as outstanding professor at the University of California’s School of Music. He has also been the recipient of awards from the American Society of Composers, the National Endowment for the Arts, Authors and Publishers, and Meet the Composers.

Many major choral ensembles, including the Elmer Iseler Singers, Dale Warland Singers, the San Francisco Symphony Chorus, Chorus America, and the Los Angeles

⁴ Ibid.

Master Chorale, have commissioned and performed his works. “His works occupy a permanent place in the standard vocal repertoire and are performed regularly by distinguished choruses and vocal artists throughout the world.”⁵ Lauridsen’s catalogue currently includes three cycles for chorus, two cycles for solo voice, one choral collection, a variety of instrumental pieces, numerous solo songs, and an assortment of individual choral works. Appendix A includes a complete listing of Lauridsen’s choral compositions.

III. Morten Lauridsen: Text, Style, and the Compositional Process

For Lauridsen, the text for a vocal/choral piece is of as great importance as the music to which it is set. He takes great care in selecting poetry by “first-class”⁶ poets – Graves, Rilke, Moss, and Lorca – on themes that are universal. The musical approach to these settings complements the style of the poetry and content.”⁷ Lauridsen provides the following reflection on poetry/text:

My passion second to music is poetry. I read and study it constantly – every day. It is a fundamental part of my life. I have profound admiration for poets who seek deeper meanings and truths and are able to express themselves elegantly through the written word. Consequently, it has been a natural development for me as a composer to wed these two passions and to set texts to music.⁸

For *Lux Aeterna*, Lauridsen draws on texts from five sacred Latin sources, each of which contains references to the universal theme of light. The work opens and closes with the text from the beginning and ending of the *Requiem Mass*, and its middle three

⁵ Peter Rutenburg, liner notes: *Lauridsen: Lux Aeterna*, Los Angeles Master Chorale directed by Paul Salamunovich, RCM 19605, 1998, CD.

⁶ Morten Lauridsen, from his pre-concert lecture at the premiere performance of *Lux Aeterna*, April 13, 1997, Doroty Chandler Pavilion, Los Angeles, CA; quoted in Timothy W. Sharp, “Morten Lauridsen’s *Lux Aeterna* – A Conductor’s Considerations,” *Choral Journal* 43:7 (February 2003): 17.

⁷ *Ibid*, 19.

⁸ *Ibid*, 18.

movements set texts from the *Te Deum* (including a line from the “Beatus Vir” [Psalm 112, the third of the *Vesper* psalms]), *O Nata Lux*, and *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* respectively.⁹

In addition to the strong influence of poetic elements in his work – “including overall meaning and mood, poetic structure, and the rhythm of text declamation”¹⁰ – Lauridsen is also conscious of the influence of the classic American song, by composers such as Jerome Kern, George and Ira Gershwin, and Cole Porter,¹¹ in his compositional style. Lauridsen has great appreciation for this particular genre and clearly considers it to be of great integrity and value: in an interview with Margaret Sue Hulley on March 8, 1997, Lauridsen stated that he actually considers himself a “song writer”, and incorporates the melodic and harmonic techniques of song writing into his compositions.¹²

When considering his compositional process, Lauridsen offers this commentary:

Central to my life has been the extended period each year that I am able to return to my roots in the Pacific Northwest. Time at my summer home in the San Juan Islands of Washington – a rustic cabin without electricity, running water, or phone – is a constantly renewing, invigorating, and reflecting experience that has deeply affected my creative process. The serenity of the island and the closeness with nature there cleanses one of facades, both artistic and personal, and enables one to closer achieve a great essence of being and art. My music takes shape in my mind while on the island each summer and then is rigorously worked out on paper when I return to Los Angeles in the fall for premiere in the springtime. My creative cycle, which has worked well for me over many years, is much like that of a farmer tilling the soil, planting, and harvesting.

⁹ Morten Lauridsen, *Lux Aeterna* (New York and Hamburg: peermusic, 1997): i.

¹⁰ Margaret Sue Hulley, “A Study of the Influence of Text in Morten Lauridsen’s *Mid-Winter Songs*” (DMA diss., Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1998), 3.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 2.

¹² *Ibid*.

IV. Harmonic Language, Text Painting, and Tonality in *Lux Aeterna*

“The chordal vocabulary [in *Lux Aeterna*] is primarily consonant, reflecting the purity and directness of Renaissance sacred music as seen in the music of Palestrina and Victoria.”¹³ Lauridsen further recalls Renaissance technique through creating a “harmonic vocabulary built on first and second inversions of pure harmonic triads...recalling the fauxbourdon of Renaissance madrigals.”¹⁴ The addition of the second scale degree (see Fig. 2), or less often the fourth scale degree, to this harmonic purity occurs frequently throughout this cycle. These ‘colour notes’ function to add a sense of warmth to the musical language and create “an ongoing harmonic energy”.¹⁵ Hulley (1998) writes, “Lauridsen has stated that he uses this chord in all of his works...” and asserts that it is “remarkable” when a chord without the added fourth is encountered.¹⁶

The instrumental forces required for the work consist of 1 flute, 1 oboe, 1 clarinet in A, 1 bassoon, 2 French horns in F, 1 bass trombone, and strings. At the premiere performance of the work with the 120-voice Los Angeles Master Chorale, the string complement was 12-10-8-6-4. However, Lauridsen suggests that a reduced string section of 10-8-6-5-3 or 8-6-5-4-2 may be used with smaller choirs.¹⁷ As an alternative to performing with orchestra, Lauridsen, in consultation with organist James Paul Buonemani of St. James’ Episcopal Church in Los Angeles, has prepared an organ score realization which includes registrations. Although the word “orchestra” is used throughout this paper to refer to the instrumental part(s), it could be replaced with the

¹³ Sharp, 20.

¹⁴ Ibid, 21.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Hulley, 26.

word “organ” if it were being used instead of the orchestra. Because of this potential to perform the work with either orchestra or organ, the discussion of specific instruments is limited throughout this paper.

According to McCoy (1994), Lauridsen’s “music is often rich in microcosmic and macrocosmic text-painting, reflecting his ‘essence of being and art’”¹⁸ which Lauridsen refers to as an important aspect of his compositional process. Numerous examples of “microcosmic” text-painting will be addressed throughout the analytic overview which follows, but there is one “macrocosmic” example that is tied to tonality and harmonic language which cannot go unaddressed.

Lux Aeterna is rooted in the D major tonality and is written primarily diatonically throughout. The most obvious exception is the second movement, which is somewhat ambiguous in its tonality, but can be most closely associated with the g dorian mode. Interestingly, the text of this movement is associated with the earthly – more specifically, Jesus as human (see Appendix B: Texts and Translations). In looking back to the “Introitus” one discovers that the only significantly chromatic passage (mm. 69-74) sets the text “hear my prayer, for unto thee all *flesh* shall come” – again dealing with the earthliness of humanity. It is apparent that Lauridsen is using tonal language as a text-painting device in *Lux Aeterna*: when referring to the earthly, especially to Jesus as an earthly being, Lauridsen moves away from the tonal centre of D major through modulation or chromaticism. Otherwise, when setting texts referring to the heavenly – light, praise, mercy – Lauridsen maintains the D major tonal center.

¹⁷ Sharp, 18.

¹⁸ Jerry McCoy, “Choral Poetry: The Extended Choral Works of Morten Lauridsen,” *Choral Journal* (November 1994): 25.

Further examples of this device are evident throughout the remainder of *Lux Aeterna*. One such example occurs in the subsequent movement, “O Nata Lux”: the B of this ternary movement (mm. 13-25) modulates, rather expectedly, to the dominant (A major), resulting in the addition of a chromatic G-sharp. Again, the text of this section, “Thou, who once designed to be clothed in *flesh* for the sake of lost ones grant us to be members of your holy body” makes reference to Jesus as human. This macrocosmic text-painting is effective in utilizing tonality, and its stability or instability, as a means of differentiating the earthly from the divine throughout *Lux Aeterna*.

V. *Lux Aeterna*: An Analytical Overview

INTROITUS

The first movement of *Lux Aeterna*, “Introitus”, is constructed using an elaborate ternary form (which in its basic construction consists of ABA). D major is maintained as the tonal centre for the majority of the movement, with the exception of a short section which moves into the key of B-flat major. Each of the A sections are divided into two parts (a and b) while the B section is composed of 3 independent segments (c, d, and e). The text for the movement (see Appendix B), which is taken from the opening movement of the Requiem Mass, can be divided into two categories: prayers of praise (sections c and d) and prayers of supplication (sections b, e and a_{1b}). The A portion of the movement is instrumental in its opening function as an introduction, but later contains text for its first section (a_{1b}) while reverting back to instruments only for its second segment (a₂). This section (a₂) serves as a ‘retransition’ into the return of the opening text at the beginning of the second B section.

The motive is the primary compositional device used throughout *Lux Aeterna*, and is at the core of Lauridsen's writing in this first movement. There are six motives employed throughout the "Introitus" (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Motives in Lauridsen's *Lux Aeterna* Introitus



In the cases of 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e, 3b, and 4b in Fig. 1, the motive usually ends with the interval presented in the 'a' measure of the example (i.e. 2a, 3a, and 4a). Less frequently, Lauridsen does end the motive with an alternative interval as presented in examples 2b, 2c, 2d, and 3b. Figure 2 provides examples of motives 1, 2a, and 3a in context.

Fig. 2: Lauridsen's use of motives 1, 2a, and 3a in "Introitus"

The musical score is for the "Introitus" by Lauridsen. It is written for orchestra/piano. The tempo starts at *Adagio* (♩ = ca. 58), then changes to *poco rit.*, then *a tempo*, and finally *rit.* before returning to *a tempo*. The score includes dynamic markings: *pp* (pianissimo), *p* (piano), and *mp* (mezzo-piano). Performance instructions include "R.H. espressivo, flowing". Motives 1, 2, and 3a are circled and labeled throughout the score. Motive 1 is a four-note ascending scale. Motive 2 is a four-note descending scale. Motive 3a is a four-note ascending scale. The score is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#).

In addition to the literal statement of these motives, Lauridsen also employs them in inversion, retrograde, retrograde-inversion, augmentation, and diminution. Fig. 3 provides an example of a single five measure segment (mm. 27-31) which includes all of these motivic permutations except diminution: motive 1 is presented in retrograde inversion and augmentation (alto voice, mm. 27-28), motive 2b is presented in retrograde (alto voice, mm. 28-29), motive 2a is presented in inversion (soprano voice, m. 30), motive 4b is presented in inversion (alto voice, m. 30), motive 6 is presented in retrograde (alto voice, m. 31), motive 1 is presented literally (soprano voice, m. 27), and motive 6 is presented literally (soprano voice, m. 28-29). This example also demonstrates Lauridsen's extensive reliance on, and frequent implementation of, motive as a compositional device.

Fig. 3: Motives in inversion, retrograde, and retrograde inversion.

27 *mp* *rit.* *a tempo* *f*

e - is, et lux per - pe - tu - a lu - ce - at 6 e - is, et lux per - pe 2a i -

e - is, et lux per - pe - tu - a lu - ce - at 2b e - is, et lux per - pe 4b i - tu - a 6 lu - ce - at

e - is, et lux per - pe - tu - a lu - ce - at e - is, et lux per - pe 4b ri - tu - a lu - ce - at

e - is, et lux per - pe - tu - a lu - ce - at e - is, et lux per - pe - tu - a lu - ce - at

Motive provides the foundation for much of the thematic material in this movement. Lauridsen frequently combines two or more motivic elements in such a way that they are subsequent to one another in order to create a thematic phrase or gesture. For example, the opening theme of the “Introitus” (first appearing in m. 2) is made up of a combination of motives 1 and 2a (see Fig. 2). Occasionally, Lauridsen elides two motives resulting in a single gesture, as in his elision of motives 4a and 5 in m. 19 of the soprano line (see Fig. 4a). Overall, motives are heavily relied upon in the creation of thematic material, even when that which is non-motivic is incorporated in the phrase. An example of this situation can be found in the thematic material beginning in the tenor and bass parts in m. 57: this four measure melody contains motive 2c and motive 4 in inversion (see Fig. 4b).

Fig. 4a: Elision of motives in thematic phrase or gesture.

19 *poco rit.* *a tempo*

Re 4a - 5 qui - em.

Fig. 4b: Use of motives in thematic material.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal piece. It consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/4. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The lyrics are: "Te de-cet hym-nus De-us in Zi-on, et ti-bi re-de-tur vo-tum in Je-". The score is marked with *mf* (mezzo-forte). There are two circled motives: "2c" and "4i". The "2c" motive is a four-note phrase (G4, A4, B4, C5) in the treble clef, and the "4i" motive is a four-note phrase (G4, A4, B4, C5) in the bass clef. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4 in the second measure of the circled motives.

It is worth noting that after only three complete measures Lauridsen inserts the first *poco rit.* Two measures later he instructs that he performers *poco rit.* again, and then *rit.* after only two more measures. Sharp suggests that most of these *poco rit.* and *rit.* markings should be treated as the “holdbacks” found in chant music, and advises that “Lauridsen’s music must ebb and flow with the arch of each phrase – *tempi* that are too slow will ruin the overall melodic line.”¹⁹ The result of the frequent *poco rit.* and *rit.* markings is a sense of the rhythmic freedom characteristic of chant and music of the Renaissance. In a conversation with Sharp, Lauridsen commented:

“Paul Salamunovich, conductor of the Los Angeles Master Chroale for whom I composed this cycle, considers *Lux Aeterna* to be one long chant. That did not happen by accident—I was writing for one of the world’s foremost experts not only on Gregorian chant but of Renaissance music in general—and while I do not incorporate an overt reference to the single chant line anywhere in the piece, the conjunct and flowing melodic lines contributing to the works’ overall lyricism and the chant-like phrase structures creating a seamlessness throughout certainly have their underpinnings in the chant literature.”²⁰

Another feature of the “Introitus” that quickly becomes apparent is the frequently changing time signature. This metric modulation occurs throughout the movement, and includes three-four, four-four, two-four, and five-four time signatures, occurring less frequently respectively. This element, too, can be tied to the chant-like character of the

¹⁹ Sharp, 20.

²⁰ Ibid, 20.

piece. Syllabic stress and melismatic ornamentation take priority over metrical organization throughout. “Renaissance procedures abound throughout *Lux Aeterna*.”²¹

The opening of the movement is marked *Adagio* (quarter note = ca. 58). Immediately in the introduction (a₁) Lauridsen foreshadows the opening text, “Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them”. The six octave void between the opening *pianissimo* pitches (D1 and D7) serves to create the image of an expansive emptiness and darkness. As that void gradually fills with pitches comprised of thematic (and motivic) material culminating with the second portion of the introduction at m. 8 (a₂), an impression is created that the cold darkness and vast nothingness have been overcome by warm radiant light. One can draw a direct comparison between this introduction and the well known biblical passage, “...and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined”,²² which seems appropriate given the textual context (see Appendix A). Together, sections a₁, 7 measures, and a₂, 9 measures, are effective in establishing the D major tonality that is maintained throughout this movement, and much of the remainder of *Lux Aeterna*.

At the beginning of the b section (m. 17), the choir enters *pianissimo*, just as the orchestra entered at the beginning of the introduction, with two measures of homophonic chant. The harmonic language of these first chords presents the harmonic language used throughout the piece: the D major chords are in first inversion with the addition of the 2nd (or 9th) scale degree, E. Lauridsen’s use of first inversion writing, recalling the *fauxbourdon* of the Renaissance, is especially effective in the context of this chant-like segment. By including the 9th as a colour note in these chords, Lauridsen creates a sense

²¹ Ibid.

²² *The Holy Bible*, Isaiah 9:2.

of warmth, comfort, and expectation, creating a wonderfully effective setting of the opening text, “Rest eternal grant unto them, O God” (see Fig 5). Following these two measures, Lauridsen restates the first word, “Requiem” (rest), this time set in more polyphonic and melismatic manner in which each line is descending – appropriately so from the perspective of word painting.

Fig. 5: Opening choral parts of “Introitus”.

The image shows a musical score for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The score is divided into two systems. The first system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second system starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "Re-qui-em ae-ter-nam do-na e-is, Do-mi-ne:". The dynamics are marked *pp* (pianissimo) for each voice part. The score is labeled with a box containing the letter 'A' in the top right corner.

The orchestra re-enters with a short interlude followed by the choir’s entry with more homophonic chant in m. 22 (b₂). Although this choral entry is similar to the entry at m. 17, here the soprano and alto, tenor, bass parts are offset by one beat until m. 25. Following the ending of the b₂ section on a second inversion D major chord, Lauridsen deliberately realigns the four voices of the homophonic chant mid-way through m. 25 (b₃) for the first hearing of the next line of text, “and let perpetual light shine upon them.” In order to illustrate the importance of the words “perpetual light shine”, this line of text is restated 3 times in a sequence-like pattern, each one higher in tessitura and stronger in dynamic. The final statement of “perpetua” (perpetual) occurs on the highest note up to this point in the choral parts (G5), at the first *forte* dynamic marking, and in the first 8

part texture. After a brief florid passage text painting the word “perpetua”, the vocal lines gradually descend and become softer until the B section draws to a close with a retrograde statement of motive 1a in the soprano on the word “Domine”. Like the b_1 and b_2 sections, b_3 also ends with a second inversion D major chord. It is also worth noting that these second inversion chords that end each section lack the expected ninth scale degree (see Fig. 6).

Fig. 6: Closing of section B.

Marked *poco piu mosso* (quarter note = 72) and “lightly”, the c section opens with a brief orchestral interlude/transition. The tenor entry which occurs part way through m. 35 marks the first accompanied choral section of the work. The choral parts in this twenty-one measure section comprise a four-part canon, the dux of which is based on the pentatonic scale. After the initial entry by the tenors, the sopranos, basses, and altos enter successively at four measure intervals with each of the four voice parts stating the canon melody in its entirety. The canon melody itself can be divided into two five measure segments. The canonic material therein is chant-like and contains several motives: 5, 2c,

1, 3b, and 5 in retrograde-inversion (see Fig 7). Motives 2d and 3a, both of which ascend melodically, are especially effective as text painting for the word “luce” (to shine).

Lauridsen also expresses the importance of the word “Domine” ([O] Lord) through its sustained treatment – it is, in fact, the only supermetrical note in the entire canon melody.

Lauridsen made the following comments regarding this canonic section:

My esteem for Renaissance contrapuntal procedures is manifested in a four-part canon on ‘et lux perpetua,’ a method of portraying musically, or painting, the textual meaning of perpetual light.²³

After a complete statement of the canon melody in a given voice, Lauridsen restates material from the second segment of the melodic line in order to facilitate a filling-out and gradual warming of the sound towards the end of the c section. This serves to prepare for the prayers of praise which follow in the d section.

Fig. 7: Canon melody



Like section c, the d section opens with a short orchestral interlude/transition (d_1). The tenor and bass voices then enter in unison (d_2) followed by the soprano and alto voices entering imitatively four measures later (d_3). These unison lines maintain the chant-like quality prevalent throughout this movement, and the voice pairing used here demonstrates another common Renaissance technique employed by Lauridsen. One

measure into the d₃ segment the four voices come together and crescendo to a *forte* dynamic in measure 65 (and the end of the D section). It is of interest to note how the upper and lower accompaniment parts in m. 60 foreshadow the soprano and bass parts in m. 64 (see Fig. 8).

Fig. 8: Accompaniment foreshadowing vocal parts

The figure displays two systems of musical notation. The top system is a piano accompaniment in 2/4 time, marked *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *poco* (poco). The bottom system shows four vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in 2/4 time, marked *mf* (mezzo-forte). The lyrics are: "Te de-cet hym - nus _ De - us in Zi-on, et ti - bi re - de - tur _ vo - tum in Je - ru - sa - lem: De - us in Zi-on, et ti - bi re - de - tur _ vo - tum in Je -". The vocal parts are written in a style that foreshadows the piano accompaniment.

The ending of the d section and beginning of the e section are elided in m. 65.

Section e is immediately marked by a feeling of unsettledness and urgency as a result of the chromatic and disjunct writing, prevalent initially in the accompaniment parts (mm. 65-68) and later, although less prominently, in the choral parts (mm. 68-74). Although the choral writing throughout this section includes the harmonic 9th, which was formerly associated with warmth, comfort, and expectation, the simultaneously disjunct and more

²³ Ibid, 20.

dissonant accompaniment parts detract significantly from its earlier effect. The pinnacle of this section is reached beginning at m. 69 (e₂) at which point the *a cappella* chorus cries out their desperate plea: “hear my prayer [O Lord].” The tonal centre shifts for this particular section, albeit briefly, to the key of B-flat major (which serves in part to foreshadow the g-dorian tonality of the second movement). Even throughout this chromatic and modulating segment Lauridsen makes extensive use of motives – the melody for the brief choral section at mm. 73-74, for example, is comprised entirely of motivic material, combining motive 2a and the retrograde inversion of motive 6 (see Fig 9).

Fig. 9: Use of motives with chromaticism.



Analytically, the paradox of the transition from section e back to section A is noteworthy: Lauridsen carefully crafts the *diminuendo* and the *ritardando* to ensure adequate preparation for the previously established character of the returning A section, but he does very little, except for inserting one am⁷ chord on the final beat of section e, to prepare for the return of the D major tonality. However, upon consideration of the macrocosmic text-painting explained in section III of this paper, Lauridsen’s abrupt modulation is entirely logical. As was previously alluded to, this section of the text – “Hear my prayer, for unto thee all flesh shall come.” – is the only portion in this movement that refers to the earthly and human, while the remainder conveys the heavenly and the divine. In the context of Lauridsen’s macrocosmic text painting in *Lux Aeterna* it is anticipated that text of a human nature will be presented in a way which alters the tonality, and in this particular situation reference to the earthly continues until

beat three of m. 74 – thus a sudden modulation is required. However, the second part of that line – “for unto thee all flesh shall come” – is unexpectedly reiterated in the choral parts of the A^1a_1 section within the context of D major. There are two primary explanations for this, the predominant of which is to suggest that Lauridsen discerns a different meaning from this text in its second presentation. That is to say that rather than emphasizing the eventuality of human flesh returning to God, Lauridsen shifts the attention to God’s role in humanity, thus altering the meaning of the statement in such a way that it refers primarily to the divine. Secondly, the polyphonic presentation of this statement of the text results in it being less audible, and therefore likely less important. Because the choral parts are of secondary importance in this section it can be concluded that the textual underpinning here is relatively insignificant.

The a_1 segment of A^1 combines the instrumental material of section Aa_1 with choral parts based on themes from the instrumental parts in that same section. The instrumental material is of primary importance in this section and the choral parts serve as accompaniment. Several factors contribute to this means of organization. First, this instrumental material is the equivalent to that of the introduction, which was entirely instrumental in its initial presentation and therefore conducive to independent and principal presentation. Furthermore, the choral parts are comprised primarily of motives, but full themes are not presented, resulting in their being less melodically interesting.

Interestingly, the choral parts of this short section make up a mini double canon at one measure in which the sopranos and basses present one dux while the altos and tenors present the other. The melodic material of the soprano-bass dux draws directly from the thematic material of the instrumental parts in sections Aa_1 and A^1a_1 , and is thus

comprised of motives 1 and 2a. The alto and tenor dux begins with motive 2b and continues with an ascending melodic line which serves as text painting for the line “to thee all flesh shall come”.

A¹a₂ is a restatement of the material initially presented in the opening a₂ section, and is followed by a restatement of the b section. It is noteworthy that the *tempo primo* marking does not occur until the beginning of the b portion of A¹ – the entire A¹a section was restated at the slightly faster tempo indicated in m. 72 at the beginning of section B. The addition of a solo violoncello line in mm. 98-106 constitutes the other alteration between this varied statement and its initial statement in section Ab.

Overall, the texture of this movement is fairly dense. Although chords are generally presented in open position, the instrumental parts rarely double the choral parts resulting in many pitches sounding simultaneously. In addition, the range is generally limited, especially in terms of higher pitches, which further contributes to the overall density in sound of the movement. The instrumental parts exhibit many of the same compositional characteristics as the choral parts – particularly the added fourth and ninth scale degrees and the extensive use of motivic elements – but are independent throughout, often presenting original melodic ideas. However, even in their independence they function effectively in supporting and enhancing textual meaning throughout.

IN TE, DOMINE, SPERAVI

The “Introitus” moves directly into the second movement, “In Te, Domine, Speravi”, without pause. Textually, this movement is comprised of two excerpts from the

Te Deum (verses 16-17 and 27-29²⁴), an early Christian hymn of praise written c. 400 A.D., which are separated with the first clause of Psalm 112:4. The opening tempo marking is *lento* (half note = ca. 52) and the time signature is 3/2. However, like the “Introitus”, the metrical structure throughout this movement is inconsistent and approached with relative freedom. In addition to the frequent *rit.* and *a tempo* markings that continue from the first movement, there are several changes in tempo indicated throughout the “In Te, Domine, Speravi” and the regularly occurring metrical modulations prevalent in the first movement persist. These elements in combination contribute to the chant-like quality that continues throughout this movement.

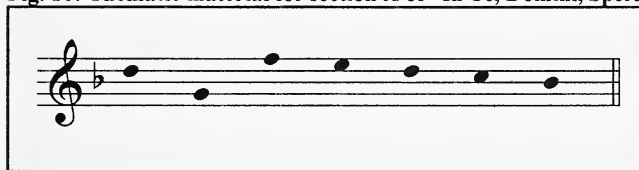
The tonality and formal structure of the “In Te, Domine, Speravi” are also quite free. Although tonally this movement is rooted in G dorian, it is the most chromatic and least tonally stable movement in the cycle. In terms of formal construction, it is set up in an ABCDB¹ structure. Each one of these formal divisions, however, varies significantly in length: 27, 7, 14, 12, and 9 measures respectively.

Within the A section there are three subdivisions: a₁, a₂, and a_{1b}. These subdivisions also vary in length, although less significantly, with a phrase of 9 measures followed by a 3 m. transition, and phrases of 7 measures and 8 measures respectively. Each of the a₁ sections is constructed around one primary theme (see Fig. 10). Although initially presented in the instrumental parts, the descending scalar element of this theme effectively portrays the text corresponding to each of its statements in the choral parts. For example, in their initial fugal entries, the sopranos and altos, in measures 4 and 6 respectively, sing this thematic material with the text “To deliver us you became human”.

²⁴ Ron Jeffers, ed., *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire*, vol. 1, *Sacred Latin Texts* (Corvallis: earthsongs, 1988), 215-217.

The descending scalar line here illustrates the heavenly (God) transforming to an earthly presence (Jesus); in other words, it serves to portray God's coming 'down' to earth. This same thematic material appears again in the a_{1b} section, this time in all choral parts beginning in m. 23. This statement of the theme encompasses the text "You opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. A light has risen in the darkness for the upright." Here, the descending scalar element portrays the kingdom of heaven's earthly accessibility and the light from heaven shining down to all believers. Lauridsen is always considerate of the marriage between music and text.

Fig. 10: Thematic material for section A of "In Te, Domini, Speravi".



After a brief transition, the a_2 section commences in m. 13. This strictly instrumental section involves complex harmonies that, for the first four measures are dissonant, but resolve to those which are more consonant for the last three. This harmonic progression serves to foreshadow the text of the a_{1b} section, "having blunted the sting of death You opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." Measures 13 through 16 characterize musically the pain and violence of the crucifixion, and 17 through 19 portray the salvation of humankind through Christ's death. From a harmonic perspective, Lauridsen's use of three consecutive 13th chords – G13, F13, and B-flat 13 – in mm. 13, 14 and 15, is noteworthy. These complex harmonies continue through the last two beats of measure 15 with the C11 and D11 chords. Another interesting feature here is the use of harmonies created by open fifths which are first presented melodically in mm. 13 and 14, and then harmonically in m. 18 (see Fig 11). It is also significant that each time these

open fifths occur they involve three notes: in the context of the Christian tradition, from which this text is drawn, three is an important number signifying God as the trinity (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). The A section comes to a close with material based on the initial theme of this movement.

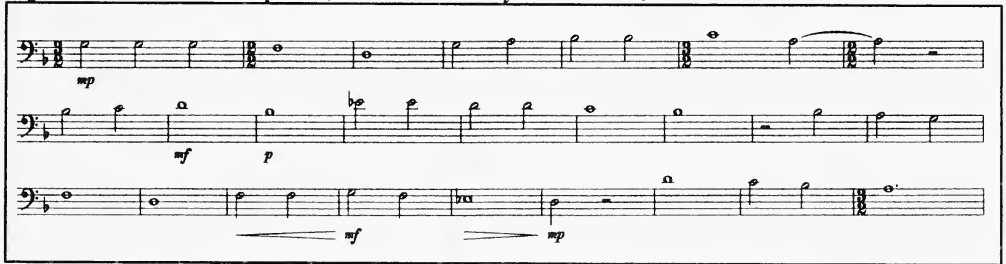
Fig. 11: Use of open fifths.

The figure displays a musical score for a vocal and piano ensemble. The score is divided into two systems, each with three staves. The first system features vocal staves (soprano and alto) and a piano accompaniment. The tempo markings are *a tempo*, *rit.*, and *a tempo*. The lyrics are: "non hor-ru - is - sti Vir - gin - is u - te - rum." The second system continues the piano accompaniment, with tempo markings *a tempo*, *rit.*, and *a tempo*. The piano part includes dynamic markings *mf*, *p*, and *mp*. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals, with some sections highlighted by boxes.

One characteristic that is unique to the A section of the “In Te, Domine, Speravi” is Lauridsen’s idea of including a *cantus firmus*. Beginning in the second measure, the

cantus firmus of “Herzlieber Jesu” from the *Nuremberg Songbook* of 1677²⁵ (see Fig 12a and 12 b) is presented throughout in the instrumental parts, underpinning other concurrent harmonic and melodic material. In addition to providing a unifying factor to this section, the original chorale text (Fig. 12c) is well-matched to the *Te Deum* text set in this movement.

Fig. 12a: In Te, Domine, Speravi, Cantus Firmus hymn tune *Herzliebster Jesu*.



²⁵ Sharp, 23.

Fig. 12b: In Te, Domine, Speravi, Cantus Firmus hymn tune in *Lux Aeterna*.

Lento (♩ = ca. 52) *rit.* **a tempo** *rit.* **mp espr.**

Tu ad

Lento (♩ = ca. 52) *rit.* **a tempo** *rit.*

mf flowing

*Cantus Firmus, "Herzliebster Jesu", Nuremberg Songbook, 1677

a tempo *rit.* *poco*

5
li - ber - an - dum sus - cep - tur - us ho - mi - nem

mp espr. *poco*

Tu ad li - ber - an - dum sus - cep - tur - us ho - mi - nem

a tempo *rit.* *poco*

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system includes vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts begin with a whole note 'Tu' followed by a half note 'ad'. The piano part features a flowing melody in the right hand and a harmonic accompaniment in the left hand. The second system continues the vocal melody with the lyrics 'li - ber - an - dum sus - cep - tur - us ho - mi - nem'. The piano accompaniment continues with a similar texture. The score is marked with various tempo changes (Lento, a tempo, rit.) and dynamic markings (mp, mf, espr., poco).

Fig. 12c: Text for *Herzliebster Jesu*

Herzliebster Jesu, was hast du verbrochen
Dass man ein solch scharf Urteil hat gesprochen
Was ist die Schuld, in was für Missetaten
Bist du geraten?

*O dearest Jesus, how hast thou offended,
That such a cruel sentence hath been spoken?
What is thy guilt, what were the evil doings
Thou hast committed?*

translation by Z. Philip Ambrose²⁶

The B section opens with a new tempo (quarter note = ca. 72) and metrical organization (4/4). For the first time in *Lux Aeterna* Lauridsen maintains a consistent time signature without frequent *rit.* and *a tempo* markings. This section is contrapuntal and chorale-like, and frequently dissonant. Marked *pianissimo* and *espressivo*, the *a cappella* chorus offers a tender and heartfelt prayer for mercy. Lauridsen's use of the 'sigh figure' in measures 28 and 31 create a sense of the yearning for grace by an undeserving humankind, thus further contributing to the essence of the text.

An element that is prevalent throughout this entire movement is the concept of voice pairing. Lauridsen makes the following comments about its use here:

The second movement most clearly exemplifies my use of Renaissance formal procedures and textures. The masses of Josquin, for example, often contain sections of paired voices. This particular device is used in *In Te, Domine, Speravi* – sopranos paired with altos, tenors paired with basses on the lengthy two-part mirror canon 'fiat misericordia' at the centre of the movement, including the idea of self reflection as well as a dialogue between Man and Creator.²⁷

This two-part mirror canon constitutes the entire C section of the movement. The slightly faster tempo (quarter note = ca. 76) suggests an increasingly desperate plea for mercy. This segment is initially sparsely accompanied with octave D's in

²⁶ *Virtuallybaroque.com*; accessed 21 October 2004, available from www.virtuallybaroque.com.

²⁷ Sharp, 22.

the lower instrumental parts, and then later sung *a cappella*. The ending of the C portion is noteworthy with its unison ascending leap of a ninth in the choral parts on the words ‘in te’ (in thee). First, the large ascending leap illustrates humankind’s trust in God/the Creator – the earthly trusting the heavenly. Furthermore, in the “Introitus” the ninth was identified to imply warmth, comfort and a sense of expectation. In this situation, as the choral parts proclaim their trust in God, the ninth implies that that trust carries with it that warmth, comfort and sense of expectation that humankind longs for.

The slower tempo (quarter note = ca. 72) at the beginning of the D section suggests that the trusting supplicants are able to take refuge in the promises implied through the use of the ninth at the end of the previous section. Once again Lauridsen pays heed to the significance of the number three in the Christian tradition with three repetitions of the instrumental figure which opens section D. This short segment is particularly chant-like in its presentation, with the first, third, and fourth choral fragments reminiscent of plainchant. The ending of this section is also highly appropriate for the text: the two whole notes effectively characterize the word “never”.

The final section of “In Te, Domine, Speravi” (B¹) is based on the initial B section (mm. 28-34). In B¹ the material is stated one tone higher in order to facilitate the movement ending on a D and thus producing a successful elision with the beginning of the “O Nata Lux”. Interestingly, the entire B section was *a cappella* while the B¹ section is strictly instrumental. However, the restatement of the same musical material prompts the listener to recall the text it initially set: “Have mercy on us O Lord, have mercy on

us.” In this way, Lauridsen further emphasizes the importance and significance of that text and of humankind’s ongoing need for forgiveness.

O NATA LUX

The third movement, “O Nata Lux”, begins *attaca* and is connected to the previous movement by the low, instrumental D. Drawing again on the significance of the number three in the context of these Christian texts, Lauridsen writes three successive D’s to function as connection material: the first two appear at the end of “In Te, Domine, Speravi” (after the musical material associated with “Have mercy on us, O Lord”), and the final one is to be played on the downbeat of “O Nata Lux”. This means of connection is similar to that used between the first two movements in which the choral pitches ‘tie’ the two movements together by holding the final pitches of “Introitus” through the first six beats “In Te, Domine, Speravi”. In fact, Lauridsen deliberately connects all the movements of *Lux Aeterna*. Obviously, he intended *Lux Aeterna* to be a cohesive cycle – “a designation for pieces that present a unification of both poetic themes and musical motives throughout an entire work”²⁸ – rather than a collection of independent pieces.

The central movement of the work, “O Nata Lux”, is an unaccompanied motet. Its text is taken from a Roman Catholic hymn originally sung during Lauds (which take place at sunrise, or ‘first light’) on the Feast of the Transfiguration. Structurally, harmonically, and compositionally it is similar to the first movement, “Introitus”, thus providing further support for Lauridsen’s cyclic approach to *Lux Aeterna*. Formally it is constructed in ternary form (ABA¹), concluding with a nine measure coda. Each of the A sections and the coda return to the D major tonality, and the B section, as one would

expect, modulates to the dominant (A major). The initial A segment (mm. 1-13) is comprised of three sub-sections (a_1 , a_2 , and a_3) and presented as a_1 (mm. 1-5) a_2 (mm. 6-7) a_3 (mm. 8-11) a_2 (mm. 12-13), creating a ‘mini-rondo’ of sorts. The central B section is made up of four short sections – b_1 (mm. 14-16), b_2 (mm. 17-19), b_3 (mm. 20-22), and b_4 (mm. 23-25) – and the final A^1 division (mm. 26-30) is comprised of five measures based on material from the opening a_1 section followed by a statement of a_2 (mm. 31-32). The coda consists of a repeated statement of the a_2 section, followed by a final four measure phrase that combines material from a_1 and A^1 .

Metrically, this movement modulates between four-four and three-four time, with one two-four measure in the coda. Perhaps more important, though, is the plethora of tempo-altering performance instructions including *rit.*, *molto rit.*, *a tempo*, *meno mosso*, and *lunga*. When one factors all of these elements, plus the proper syllabic stress, into the metrical equation, the result is the homophonic chant that was found in the first movement, and that will appear again in the final movement of the work. This style of writing lends itself well to the *Molto espressivo* (quarter note = ca. 40) which Lauridsen has requested for this movement.

Motive plays an important role in maintaining melodic unity throughout this movement. There are four motives contained within “O Nata Lux”, each revolving around the perfect fourth (see Fig 13).

²⁸ McCoy, 25.

Fig. 13: Motives in “O Nata Lux”



As he does in “Introitus”, Lauridsen presents these motives both literally and in altered form, using the same devices: inversion, retrograde, retrograde-inversion, and augmentation. Figure 14 provides an example of the extensive use of these motives in context.

The harmonies of the a_1 section embody the response to the prayer of supplication being offered up with this text; they unquestionably grant the warmth of light, the comfort of redemption, and the promise of grace to all who seek it. As was addressed in the previous section, all pitches of both A sections, where the text refers to the heavenly, fit diatonically within the key of D major. However, in the B section, for which the text refers to Jesus as an earthly being, the piece modulates to the key of A major, resulting in a chromatic G#. Interestingly, the warmth and compassion expressed by the opening harmonies continue throughout this section, suggesting that supplicants will indeed be embraced and “made members of [God’s] holy body”.

The opening of “O Nata Lux” is clearly reminiscent of the Renaissance, and employs homophonic chant and *fauxbourdon* techniques. As can be expected, the ninth, or second, is present in the majority of the chords. Appropriately, the lowest notes of the

A section, which appear in the a_2 subdivision, set the text "...the praises and prayers of your supplicants". The a_3 subsection opens polyphonically with the melody in the alto line. After a false entry by the tenors in m. 9 the melody line reverts back to the soprano part, and by the end of the a_3 section the texture has returned to homophony, which continues through the restatement of a_2 .

Section B is polyphonic throughout. The four motives previously identified, and their altered forms, serve as the foundation for recurring melodic material throughout this section (see Fig. 14), thus unifying it with the A section. The polyphonic layout of this section is unique: the sopranos, tenors, and altos enter respectively at one measure intervals with the same opening measure of melodic material, although at different pitches, while the basses sing entirely different material which is twice repeated. The sopranos re-enter with similar material to that which they presented initially, but the end of the melodic line is slightly modified. Beginning in m. 19, the sopranos and altos have a quasi-antiphonal section which continues until m. 26, at which point the altos enter with the melody for the beginning of the recapitulative A section.

Fig. 14: Use of motives in Section B of "O Nata Lux".

a tempo

13 *mp*

re. Qui car - ne quon - dam con - 1 ri te - gi, qui con - - - te -

re. Qui car - ne quon - dam con 2r te -

re. Qui car - ne quon - dam con 1 ri - te - gi, con - te -

re. Qui car - ne quon - dam con - te - gi, con - te -

a tempo

mp

rit. a tempo molto rit.

16 *mp*

gi dig - na - tus es pro per - di -

gi dig - na 2 - 3i - tus es pro per - - - di -

gi dig - na 3 - - - tus es pro per - 1 di di - tis, per - di -

gi dig - na - tus es pro per - - - di - tis, per - di -

rit. a tempo molto rit.

p mp

3i

The image displays a musical score for 'O Nata Lux', specifically Section B. It features four vocal staves and two piano accompaniment staves. The score is divided into two systems. The first system begins at measure 13, marked 'a tempo' and 'mp'. The vocal parts have lyrics: 're. Qui car - ne quon - dam con - 1 ri te - gi, qui con - - - te -' and 're. Qui car - ne quon - dam con 2r te -'. The piano part has lyrics: 're. Qui car - ne quon - dam con - te - gi, con - te -'. The second system begins at measure 16, with tempo markings 'rit.', 'a tempo', and 'molto rit.' above the staves. The vocal parts have lyrics: 'gi dig - na - tus es pro per - di -', 'gi dig - na 2 - 3i - tus es pro per - - - di -', 'gi dig - na 3 - - - tus es pro per - 1 di di - tis, per - di -', and 'gi dig - na - tus es pro per - - - di - tis, per - di -'. The piano part has lyrics: 'gi dig - na - tus es pro per - - - di - tis, per - di -'. Dynamic markings include 'mp', 'p', and 'mp'. Measure numbers 13, 16, and 3i are indicated. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and slurs.

A¹ can be most closely associated with the a₃ section of A. In this case, the alto melody line also quickly shifts to the sopranos, albeit with different text, on beat one of m. 29 (see Fig. 15). It is also of interest to associate the rhythm of the lower 2 parts in mm. 27-29 with that of the same parts in m. 20-22 in the B section. This provides another example of Lauridsen's concern with cohesiveness throughout this work.

Fig. 15: Transfer of melody from soprano to alto.

The coda of “O Nata Lux” is comprised of two sections – a_{2b} and d. a_{2b} is almost an exact restatement of a₂, but is rhythmically augmented at the end of the phrase, and has a cadential resolution to the root position tonic chord rather than the significantly weaker 2nd inversion employed previously. The final phrase of the piece (d) is similar to the opening of the A¹ section, except for the fact that the melody appears in the soprano part as it did in the opening A section, and the lower three voices provide a homophonic accompaniment similar in fashion to that of the lower two voices at the beginning of the A¹ section. Three measures prior to the end of this movement, the tenors sing a descending first inversion D major triad on the word *lumine*, which effectively illustrates the heavenly light shining down. Clear word painting is also apparent for the final chord

on which the word *lumine* is marked *lunga*, thus functioning to musically illustrate the shining down of ‘everlasting light’.

VENI, SANCTE SPIRITUS

“Immediately following the conclusion of “O Nata Lux” is the exuberant song, “Veni, Sancte Spiritus”. This movement is as outgoing and joyous as “O Nata Lux” is introspective.”²⁹ The juxtaposition of these two “paired songs”³⁰ is comparable with that of the “Kyrie” and “Gloria” in the Latin *Missa Brevis*, in which both musician and listener are transported through the depths and heights of their faith. The texts of both “O Nata Lux” and “Veni, Sancte Spiritus” consist of prayers of supplication, the former more intensely introspective and emotional, and the latter jubilant and spirited.

The parallel to the *Missa Brevis* can extend to a broader comparison between *Lux Aeterna* and the popular setting of the Ordinary of the Mass in five movements. However, it is as though Lauridsen has combined the Ordinary of the High Mass with the Requiem Mass, thus creating a solemn work with the same format as the Ordinary of the Mass. Rather than the “Kyrie” and “Gloria” in the introductory rite, Lauridsen uses the Requiem text for the “Introitus” but omits the “Kyrie” text that it traditionally concludes with. This text, however, appears in the second movement, “In Te, Domine, Speravi”. It is tradition in the Catholic liturgy to omit the Hymn of Praise (“Gloria”) for services of mourning (funerals, during Lent, etc.) and thus that seems entirely appropriate in the context of these texts. The third movement, which Lauridsen refers to as “the central *a*

²⁹ Sharp, 26-27.

³⁰ Rutenburg, liner notes.

cappella motet” functions appropriately in replacing the “Credo” – the statement of beliefs that is central in the Catholic rite. “Veni, Sancte Spiritus”, a joyous prayer to the Holy Spirit, is a suitable replacement for the “Sanctus”, both textually and musically. And finally, the “Agnus Dei – Lux Aeterna” presents the standard “Agnus Dei” text followed by the Requiem’s “Lux Aeterna” in place of the “Dona Nobis Pacem”. Formally, Lauridsen has unquestionably drawn on settings of the Ordinary from the High Mass for his composition of *Lux Aeterna*.

Lauridsen refers to “Veni, Sancte Spiritus” as jubilant canticle. Canticles, like the hymn “O Nata Lux”, are sung at Lauds in the Roman tradition. This is significant not only in terms of the pairing of this movement with the previous, but also because it provides effective indirect reference to light. The movement is set in triple meter and marked “Exuberantly” (dotted half note = ca. 56). “It is cast in a five-part, rondo form (ABA¹BA), another form traced back to the Medieval and Renaissance periods.”³¹ Although Lauridsen has, in the previous 3 movements, been quite free metrically and rhythmically, the lilting rhythm of this movement is contrasting, and there are comparably few *ritardandi* or other tempo altering markings. The D-major tonality from the conclusion of the previous movement continues, and is immediately reaffirmed through the I-IV-I-IV-V harmonic progression of the orchestral introduction.

The choir enters *forte* after the four measure introduction and continues to sing boisterously throughout the A section (mm. 5-23). Lauridsen takes a straight-forward approach texturally throughout this first verse – the choir sings much of it in unison, and the remainder is homophonic. He does include one quasi-antiphonal section between the

women and the men in mm. 13-16, after which the entire choir sings “Come, light our hearts” in unison.

After a brief instrumental interlude, the B section (mm. 24-43) begins with substantially softer dynamic (*mp*). As this verse progresses, however, the volume gradually increases – to *mf* at m. 28, and then to *f* at m. 33. The texture throughout this section is primarily homophonic, with the exception of two brief segments. Voice pairings are presented between the soprano and alto, and tenor and bass in mm. 29-32. Here, initially the soprano and alto pairing sustains its final pitches from the previous phrase while the new tenor and bass pairing presents new material. That material is then reiterated in the following two measures by the sopranos and altos, while the paired tenors and basses accompany. In the three measures which follow – mm. 32-36 – the altos present the melody while the sopranos, tenors, and basses provide a homophonic accompaniment. This section ends with a brief instrumental interlude (mm. 40-43).

The first eight measures of the A¹ section differ from those in the other A sections, but the final eight measures directly coincide with those of the opening and closing A sections. The choir entry takes place on a unison E at a *fortissimo* dynamic marking. Not only is this section central from a formal perspective, but the text, “O light most blessed, fill the inmost heart of thy faithful” is also central in its direct reference to light. The sopranos, tenors, and basses negotiate their highest notes in the entire work in this phrase, suggesting a particular urgency and importance in this prayer. Furthermore, the accompaniment throughout this section has been filled out and includes a number of figurative elements. The remainder of this section, mm. 48-62, is comprised of an

³¹ Sharp, 27.

entirely homophonic restatement of the material found in mm. 9-23 in the initial A section.

Measures 63-82 present a literal restatement of the B section, with only rhythmic changes which are necessary to accommodate the new text. The final A section is also a restatement of earlier material; it is comprised of the initial A statement (mm. 5-23) with a seven measure coda added to the end of the movement. The *crescendo* into the coda, and the 10 beat duration of the final chord are both appropriate for the last line of text: “Grant everlasting joy”.

Overall, the texture of the movement is translucent – while the choir and accompaniment both contribute rich harmonies and beautiful melodies, there is not so much sounding at any one time that the texture sounds heavy. The accompaniment parts frequently only change pitch on the downbeat of each measure and serve primarily to provide harmonic context and transitional material between the verses of this movement. The choral parts are, for the first time in the work, occasionally doubled in the instrumental accompaniment.

AGNUS DEI – LUX AETERNA

The final movement of *Lux Aeterna* “is built with two sections: the first determined by the “Agnus Dei” text, and the second by the extended return of the opening material found on the words ‘Lux aeterna’.”³² Textually, the first segment is comprised of the fifth section of the Requiem Mass (“Agnus Dei”), and the second consists of the sixth section of the Requiem Mass (“Lux Aeterna”). This movement is the longest of the work – it is “at least one third longer than the longest of any of the other

movements.”³³ By reprising the material from the opening movement (“Introitus”) in the final movement, Lauridsen creates a musical arch – a form that can be found in a number of his cycles. Most apparent is Lauridsen’s reuse of musical material from “Introitus” in the second section of this movement, but the first section is also clearly reminiscent of the opening movement in its character, texture, and structure. Within the two macro-formal designations of the binary form are numerous subsections. The A section (mm. 1-46) is ternary in form, consisting of a three measure introduction, section a (mm. 5-10), a three-measure transition, b₁ (mm. 14-23), b₂ (mm.24-33), another four-measure transition, and finally a¹ (mm. 37-45). The overall form of the B section is C D E C¹, concluding with a substantial 42 measure coda. Contained within these formal units are many smaller subsections which are detailed on page 48 of this paper.

“The seamlessness of this music comes into play again as light leads to new light, as harmony merges into harmony, and as tempo modulates into new tempo. The harmonic variation that comes into play as the final movement emerges is the addition of not only the interval of the second to harmonic triads, but now the addition of the fourth to the triad.”³⁴ These colour notes are immediately evident in the instrumental transition and in the first phrase of the choral parts. In fact, there is not one single chord within the first nine measures of singing that does not include one of these colour notes. Figure 16 details the implementation of added ninths (seconds) and fourths to the first choral phrase.

³² Sharp, 30.

³³ Sharp, 30.

³⁴ Sharp, 29-30.

Fig. 16: Colour notes within the first choral phrase of “Agnus Dei – Lux Aeterna”

measure	beat(s)	voice part	colour note
4	1-2	tenor	9 th
4	3-4	tenor	4 th
5	1-2	alto I	9 th
5	3	alto II	4 th
5	4	alto	9 th
6	1	soprano	9 th
6	2	tenor	9 th
6	3	bass	9 th
6	4	tenor	9 th
7	1	soprano	4 th
7	2	tenor	4 th
7	3-4	alto	4 th
8	1-2	tenor	9 th
8	3-4	tenor I	9 th

Lauridsen continues to make extensive use of motive in this movement: he draws on motives previously employed in the work, but also implements new motivic elements. Especially evident in this movement are the motives employed in “O Nata Lux”, both in their original and altered forms. A new motive (motive 5) consisting of three descending scalar notes appears frequently throughout the opening section of this movement, both literally and in inversion (see Figs. 17 and 17b).

Fig. 17a: Motive 5.

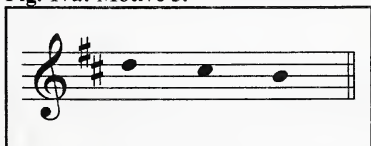


Fig. 17b: Motives in context of “Agnus Dei – Lux Aeterna”.

rit. lunga **A** a tempo *pp*

Ag - nus

Ag - nus 2 ri

Ag - nus

Ag - nus

Andante (♩ = ca. 76) rit. lunga **A** a tempo

f decrescendo *p*

De - i, qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta 5 - ta 5i mun 4 di, do - na e - is

De - i, qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun 5 di, do - na e - is

De - i, qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di, do - na 5i e - is

De - i, qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun 5 di, do - na e - is

rit. a tempo

rit. a tempo

The three measure transition which links the “Veni, Sancte Spiritus” to the “Agnus Dei – Lux Aeterna” also serves to facilitate a change in musical character from that which is joyous to one that is more pleading in nature. It does this through the descending melodic line, the *decrescendo* from *f* to *p*, the *rit.* in the third measure, and the *lunga* indication over the final transitional note leading into the fifth and final movement. The following *a cappella* section is introspective, raw and sensuous: a product of the harmonic language and homophonic simplicity presented here. Lauridsen effectively illustrates the word “requiem” (rest) in m. 10 with a descending line, pitches that are low in the register, and a *rit.*

“The idea of retrograde in music, again common in the masses of Josquin is also found here—the wind progression at the opening of the Agnus Dei is answered by the strings in an exact retrograde several measures later.”³⁵ This retrograde response composes the material of the transitional section between a and b.

Marked *poco piu mosso*, the b section draws specifically on thematic and motivic material from the third movement of the work, “O Nata Lux”. The choral parts in measures 14-15 of “Agnus Dei-Lux Aeterna” employ the same musical material as that originally presented in measures 23-24 of the third movement. However, a clear connection to the first movement of the work is apparent in the alternation between instrumental and *a cappella* choral parts throughout this and the surrounding sections.

Interestingly, subsections b₁ and b₂ are the only two formal segments in this movement that are not linked with transitional material. This is due to their similarity to one another – mm. 24-29 of b₂ are comprised of harmonic and melodic material that is identical to that of mm. 14-19 in section b₁ – thus rendering a transition unnecessary.

The obvious difference between these two sections is that the first four measures of b_2 (mm. 24-27) make instrumental their choral counterparts from the previous section, resulting, from the perspective of the listener, in a transitional segment. Upon the re-entry of the choir in m. 28 there is a literal restatement of mm. 18-19 from section b_1 , followed by a 4 measure codetta. Textually, the codetta's two statements of "dona eis requiem" (grant unto them rest) are heard as intensively pleading and increasingly desperate due to Lauridsen's musical treatment of them: increasing dynamics, faster melodic motion, and higher tessitura. Motives continue to play an important function in the melodic composition of this particular section: figure 18 details their frequent appearance (based on the motives presented in "O Nata Lux" and earlier in this movement).

³⁵ Sharp, 29.

Fig. 18: Appearance of motives in section b.

The musical score is divided into two systems, each with four vocal staves and a piano accompaniment.

System 1 (Measures 27-30):

- Vocal Staves:**
 - Staff 1: *mf* Qui tol 5 - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di, do - na 2^{re} - is *mp*
 - Staff 2: *mf* Qui 1^{re} tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di, do - na 4^{ta} re - is *mp*
 - Staff 3: *mf* Qui tol 5 - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di, do - na e - is *mp*
 - Staff 4: *mf* Qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di, do - na e - is *mp*
- Piano Accompaniment:**
 - Measures 27-30 show a steady accompaniment with chords and moving lines in both hands.

System 2 (Measures 31-34):

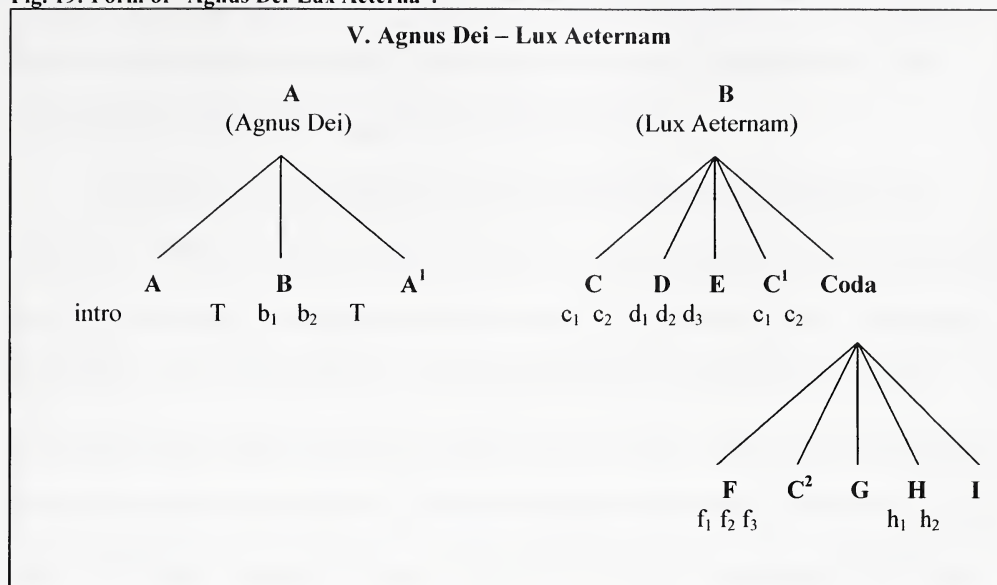
- Vocal Staves:**
 - Staff 1: *em.* re - qui - em, do - na e - is re - qui - em. *p*
 - Staff 2: re - qui - em, do 5 na e - is re - qui - em. *p*
 - Staff 3: re - qui - em, do - na e 5 aug is re - qui - em. *p*
 - Staff 4: re - qui - em, do - na e 5 aug is re - qui - em. *p*
- Piano Accompaniment:**
 - Measures 31-34 show a steady accompaniment, with a *mp* marking in measure 34.

Tempo primo is indicated at the end of the second system.

The three measure transition which follows is composed of the same instrumental material as that which comprises the introduction to this movement. Section a¹ succeeds the transition with the conventional third and final iteration of the Agnus Dei text as it appeared in the a section. In fact, the only apparent difference between sections a and a¹ is the addition of 2 measures at the end of the a¹ section which function to accommodate the transition into the B section. Lauridsen marks these two measures (mm. 44 and 45) *meno mosso* to facilitate the change in tempo from the A section's *Andante* to *Adagio* of the B section. Musically, these two transitional measures are similar to the two preceding, but textually they anticipate the imminent B segment.

Formally, the B section is very involved. The material within this second macro-section of the "Agnus Dei – Lux Aeterna"'s binary form can be divided into four primary sections – C, D, E, C¹ – plus a coda, all of which can be further broken down into various sub-sections. Within those smaller divisions Lauridsen continues to draw on motivic material as an important unifying device. Fig. 19 provides a graphic representation of the formal composition of this movement, including both the A and B sections.

Fig. 19: Form of “Agnus Dei-Lux Aeterna”.



Beginning at m. 46, the C section combines material from the instrumental introduction of the “Introitus” with new material in the choral parts. Textually, the c_1 sub-division consists of only one word: *sempiternam* (everlasting). Lauridsen illustrates this word musically by treating it melodically, drawing it out by as many as fourteen notes on one of either the “ter” or “nam” syllables. In addition, Lauridsen connects the idea of everlasting rest (*requiem aeternam*) to the heavenly with the ascending violin line in the instrumental accompaniment. The c_2 section begins at m. 53 with two statements of *et lux* (and light) only one measure after the low double bass notes, previously associated with darkness in the introduction to “Introitus”, stop sounding. While material from the introduction of the first movement continues in the instrumental parts for the second portion of c_2 , the choral parts consist of a powerful unison statement of the text “et lux aeterna, Domine”. This is the only entirely unison line in the whole work, suggesting its importance as the expression of the essence of this work – an impassioned

plea for eternal light for all of humanity. This unison line also makes strong reference to chant, a predominant characteristic of this work, but one which has been less evident throughout the fourth and fifth movements up until this point.

Measures 61-112 are comprised of musical material initially presented in the “Introitus”. Although the text has been changed, the musical material has remained intact and plays a vital role in completing the formal ‘arch’ referred to previously in this paper. Lauridsen’s gift for text-painting is especially evident here as he effectively colours words even when using old musical material to set new text. The most obvious example of this is the previously mentioned melismatic treatment of the word, “aeternam” (see Fig 19a). But further examples are present in mm. 63-64 with the descending octave in the soprano part completing the text “luceat eis, Domine” (shine upon them, O Lord) (see Fig 19b), and in mm. 76-77 with the descending completion of the text “quia pius” (for thou art merciful) (see Fig. 19c).

Fig 19a: Text painting of “aeternam”.

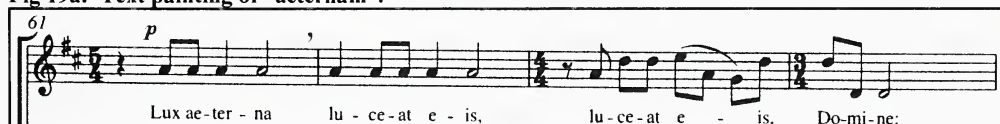


Fig. 19b: Text painting of “luceat eis, Domine”.

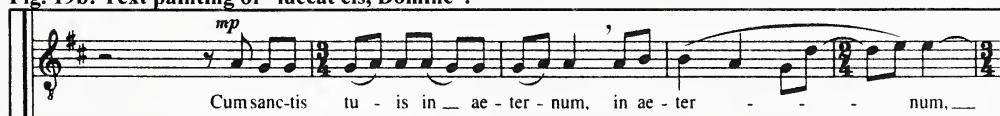


Fig. 19c: Text painting of “qui pius es”.

The musical score for Fig. 19c shows four vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a piano accompaniment staff. The tempo markings are *a tempo*, *rit.*, and *Poco più mosso* (marked with a box 'G' and a note value of ca. 72). The lyrics are "tis, qui - a pi - us, qui - a pi - us es." The piano part includes dynamic markings like *f*, *mf*, and *mp*. The score is in G major and 2/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

The coda begins at measure 113. Marked “joyfully”, this closing segment consists of two primary sections: the “Alleluia” section and the “Amen” section. The “Alleluia” comprises all of the F section, and the “Amen” section includes subdivisions C², G, H, and I which have been labeled separately because of their reference to different segments of musical material presented earlier in the work.

The F section is composed of the two subdivisions, f_1 (mm. 113-124) and f_2 (mm. 125-30), which increase incrementally in volume and intensity. The f_1 section is based on material from the “Veni, Sancte Spiritus” which, although clearly related, has been extensively reworked with various harmonic changes and adjustments to facilitate its fit within a different metrical structure. Figs 20 a and b compare the initial statement of this material in the fourth movement with this modified recurrence. It is of interest here to note the reference to the “Introitus” with the instrumental segments that appear at the end of each choral segment (although they are not *a cappella* in this section). Section f_2 is taken from the “Agnus Dei” section (section A) of the fifth movement, drawing specifically from mm. 14-23. Interestingly, this reiteration is presented in the key of D

major while the original statement appeared in A major – an appropriate setting when considering the earthly text of the initial statement in comparison to the heavenly alleluias of the latter. The final phrase of f_2 is extended by two measures which function, through a decreased dynamic level and *a cappella* singing, to prepare for the more subdued Amen section that follows.

Fig. 20a: Opening material of “Veni, Sancte Spiritus”.

Exuberantly (♩ = ca. 56) *rit.*

Fig. 20b: Material from Coda in “Agnus Dei-Lux Aeterna”.

rit. Joyfully più mosso (♩ = ca. 76)

The Amens which bring the work to a close begin in section C² (mm. 131-135). This section is marked *Meno mosso* and is more reflective and simplistic than the several previous sections had been. Lauridsen combines old material in the instrumental parts with other previously presented material in the choral parts: the instrumental parts are once again taken from the introduction to the “Introitus”, and the simple unison choral “Amen” section is based on the “et lux” statements first seen in the c_2 section of this movement.

The 4 measures that follow are comprised of a single *a cappella* Amen statement and serve as transitional material into the two closing sections. This transition is again marked *Meno mosso* and dynamically becomes even softer, arriving at a *piano* marking in m. 139.

The ending of the movement is comprised of two short sections, both of which are closely related to their original statements. The first, section H, presents a recurrence of the instrumental material found at the very beginning of this movement. This material is stated twice (f_1 and f_2), the first time in conjunction with the sustained unison A of the choral parts, and the second time independently, serving as a quasi-transition into the final “Amen” statement. This closing Amen is accompanied by the instrumental material originally presented as the introduction to the “Veni, Sancte Spiritus”, although here it is presented at a significantly slower tempo and is much more introspective in character. The final chord of the work is reminiscent of the first single notes of the “Introitus” with the the very low and very high notes. However, the expansive void that originally appeared between them in the introduction to the “Introitus” is filled with the notes of a D major chord with an added ninth, as if to suggest that the warmth of light, perhaps everlasting light, has filled the void of darkness.

VI. Conclusion

Through a deconstruction of Morten Lauridsen’s *Lux Aeterna* it has become evident that the work is comprised of a synthesis between the old and the new, or perhaps more specifically, a presentation of the old in a new way. Lauridsen incorporates an extensive vocabulary of traditional compositional devices which stretch as far back as

thirteen centuries with his reference to plainchant throughout the work. This “is the coup of his genius that not only doesn’t the music sound academic or labored, but fresh and new, as in a modern distillation of essential flavours.”³⁶ His brilliant text painting also plays a vital role in breathing new life in this wonderfully affective setting of these ancient texts. The result is an ‘enlightening’ experience for the twenty-first century listener “which leaves the impression that all the questions have been answered”.³⁷

³⁶ Peter Rutenburg, program notes © October 10, 1999, Los Angeles Master Chorale.

³⁷ Strimple, 247-248.

APPENDIX 1

The Published Choral Music of Morten Lauridsen

Ave Maria. SATB chorus *a cappella*. peermusic 61919-121. Approximate duration 7:30.

Dirait-on. Text by Rainer Maria Rilke. SATB, TTBB, or treble chorus and piano.
peermusic 61880-120. Approximate duration 4:30.

Les Chansons des Roses. Text by Rainer Maria Rilke. SATB chorus and piano.
Approximate duration 16:30.

- I. “En Une Seule Fleur”. peermusic 61842-121.
- II. “Contre Qui, Rose”. peermusic 61843-121.
- III. “De Ton Rêve Trop Plein”. peermusic 61844-121.
- IV. “La Rose Complète” peermusic 61845-121.
- V. “Dirait-on”. peermusic 61846-121.

Lux Aeterna. SATB chorus and chamber orchestra (orchestral parts available on rental) sc 61925-186, or SATB chorus and organ (or piano) 61914-122. Approximate duration 27:00.

- I. “Introitus”
- II. “Ín Te, Domine, Speravi”
- III. “O Nata Lux”
- IV. “Veni, Sancte Spiritus”
- V. “Agnus Dei – Lux Aeterna”

Madrigali: Six "Firesongs" on Italian Renaissance Poems. SATB chorus *a cappella*.
Approximate duration 17:30.

- I. “Ov'è, Lass', Il Bel Viso?”. peermusic 61649-121.
- II. “Quando Son Piu Lontan”. peermusic 61650-121.
- III. “Amor, Io Sento L'alma”. peermusic 61651-121.
- IV. “Io Piango”. peermusic 61646-121.
- V. “Luci Serene e Chiare”. peermusic 61652-121.
- VI. “Se Per Havervi, Oime”. peermusic 61653-121.

Mid-Winter Songs, On Poems by Robert Graves. SATB chorus and orchestra (piano/vocal score available from Opus Music Publishers, Inc.). Approximate duration 19:00.

- I. "Lament for Pasiphae"
- II. "Like Snow"
- III. "She Tells Her Love While Half Asleep"
- IV. "Mid-Winter Walking"
- V. "Intercession in Late October"

O Magnum Mysterium. SATB chorus *a cappella*. peermusic 61860-121. Approximate duration 6:00.

O Nata Lux. SATB chorus *a cappella*. peermusic 61908-12. Approximate duration 5:00.

APPENDIX 2

Texts and Translations for *Lux Aeterna*

I. INTROITUS

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine:
et lux perpetua luceat eis.
Te decet hymnus Deus in Zion,
et tibi redetur votum
in Jerusalem:
exaudi orationem meam,
ad te omnis caro veniet.
Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine:
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

*Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.
A hymn befits thee, O God in Zion,
and to thee a vow shall be fulfilled
in Jerusalem:
Hear my prayer,
for unto thee all flesh shall come.
Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.*

II. IN TE, DOMINE, SPERAVI

Tu ad liberandum suscepturus hominem
non horruisti Virginis uterum.
Tu devicto mortis aculeo,
aperuisti credentibus regna coelorum.
Exortum est in tenebris lumen rectis.
Miserere nostri, Domini,
miserere nostri.
Fiat misericordia tua, Domine, super nos
Quemadmodum speravimus in te.
In te Domine, speravi:
non confundar in aeternum.

*To deliver us, you became human,
and did not disdain the virgin's womb.
Having blunted the sting of death, You
opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers
A light has risen in the darkness for the
upright. Have mercy upon us, O Lord,
have mercy upon us.
Let thy mercy be upon us, O Lord,
As we have trusted in thee.
I thee, O lord, I have trusted:
Let me never be confounded.*

III. O NATA LUX

O nata lux de lumine,
Jesu redemptor saeculi,
dignare clemens supplicum
laudes preces que sumere.
Qui carne quondam contegi
dignatus es pro perditis.
Nos membra confer effici,
tui beati corporis.

*O born light of light,
Jesus, redeemer of the world,
mercifully deem us worthy and accept
the praises and prayers of your supplicants.
Thou who once deigned to be clothed in flesh
for the sake of the lost ones,
grant us to be made members
of your holy body.*

IV. VENI, SANCTE SPIRITUS

Veni, Sancte Spiritus,
et emitte coelitus
lucis tuae radium.
Veni, pater pauperum,
veni, dator munerum,
veni, lumen cordium.

Consolator optime,
dulcis hospes animae,
dulce refrigerium.
in labore requies,
in aestro temperies,
in fletu solatium.

O lux beatissima,
Reple cordis intima
Tuorum fidelium.
Sine tuo numine,
Nihil est in homine,
Nihil est innoxium.

Lava quod est sordidum,
Riga quod est aridum,
Sana quod est saucium.
Flecte quod est rigidum,
Fove quod est frigidum,
Rege quod est devium.

Da tuis fidelibus,
In te confidentibus,
Sacrum septenarium.
Da virtutis meritum,
Da salutis exitum,
Da perenne gaudium.

*Come, Holy Spirit,
Send forth from heaven
The ray of thy light.
Come, Father of the poor,
Come, giver of gifts,
Come, light of hearts.*

*Thou best of Consolers,
Sweet guest of the soul,
Sweet refreshment.
In labor, thou art rest,
In heat, the tempering,
In grief, the consolation.*

*O light most blessed,
Fill the inmost heart
Of all thy faithful.
Without your grace,
There is nothing in us,
Nothing that is not harmful.*

*Cleanse what is sordid,
Moisten what is arid,
Heal what is hurt,
Flex what is rigid,
Fire what is frigid,
Correct what goes astray.*

*Grant to thy faithful
Those trusting in thee,
Thy sacred seven-fold gifts.
Grant the reward of virtue,
Grant the deliverance of salvation,
Grant everlasting joy.*

V. AGNUS DEI – LUX AETERNA

Agnus Dei,
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
Dona eis requiem.

*Lamb of God,
who takest away the sins of the world,
grant them rest.*

Agnus Dei,
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
Dona eis requiem.

*Lamb of God,
who takest away the sins of the world,
grant them rest.*

Agnus Dei,
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
Dona eis requiem sempiternam.

*Lamb of God,
who takest away the sins of the world,
grant them rest everlasting.*

Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine:
Cum sanctis tuis in aeternum:
Quia pius es.

*May light eternal shine upon them, O Lord,
in the company of thy Saints for
ever and ever; for thou art merciful.*

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
Et lux perpetua luceat eis.

*Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.*

Alleluia. Amen.

Alleluia. Amen.

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